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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SARAJEVO 000331

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR(DICARLO), EUR/SCE(HOH/FOOKS); NSC FOR
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SUBJECT: BOSNIA - DODIK AND REPUBLIKA SPRSKA OFFICIALS
PRESS RS CLAIMS TO SELF-DETERMINATION

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[1](#)B. SARAJEVO 287
[1](#)C. SARAJEVO 226
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Classified By: Ambassador Charles English. Reason 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: It appears that Republika Srpska (RS) officials, including RS Prime Minister Milorad Dodik, are using Kosovo's declaration of independence to assert an RS right to self-determination. Dodik's party, the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), first made such a claim on January 31 (Ref C). In a February 18 joint statement, Dodik and other senior RS officials claimed that Kosovo independence enshrined a new right under the UN Charter for territories of member state to self-determination. On the same day, SNSD officials also announced that their party will ask the state-level parliament to adopt a "Declaration of Responsibility" on February 20. The declaration's language is deliberately provocative (among other things it labels the RS a "state entity"), and Dodik has implied the declaration's rejection would constitute an attack on the RS. On February 21, the RS National Assembly (RSNA) will hold an extraordinary session to discuss Kosovo. We understand that SNSD will propose a resolution modeled on the February 18 statement signed by Dodik. Dodik is likely to dismiss these steps privately as designed to manage RS public angst over Kosovo independence, and we do not believe he intends exercise what he claims is the RS right to self-determination in the short-term. Nonetheless, we see his statements and any subsequent RSNA resolution as an attempt to cement an RS claim, which would further undercut Dayton, the Bosnian state and the international community's authority here. END SUMMARY

RS Rhetoric After Kosovo Independence is Problematic

[1](#)2. (C) As anticipated RS officials, including RS PM Dodik, have criticized Kosovo's declaration of independence and underscored that the RS would not permit Bosnia to recognize it as an independent state (Refs A and D). Unfortunately, rhetoric from RS officials over the last three days has gone much further. After initially appealing for calm, Dodik made statements similar to those he has been making for almost a year implying a parallel between the RS's future status and

Kosovo's final status. Rajko Vasic, SNSD party spokesman, declared that Kosovo's independence has reduced Bosnia's "chances of survival." More disturbingly, Dodik, RS President Kuzmanovic, and Speaker of the Republika Srpska National Assembly (RSNA) Radojicic have signed a declaration asserting that Kosovo's independence enshrines a "new interpretation" of the UN Charter that allow "parts of a territory of a member state" the right to self-determination. This follows a January 31 assertion by Dodik's party that the RS already had the right to self-determination under Dayton (Ref C).

SNSD's "Declaration of Responsibility"

13. (C) On February 18, SNSD announced plans to ask the state-level House of Representatives (HoR) to adopt a "Declaration of Responsibility" at its February 20 session. The declaration contains language supporting Bosnia's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions and welcoming EUFOR's presence until Bosnia joins the EU, but it also contains more provocative language. The declaration "confirms" that Bosnia was established as part of the Dayton Accords. It also "confirms" the RS as a "state entity" within Bosnia. Finally, the declaration calls on Parliament to formally adopt Dayton's Annex 4 as the country's constitution, and implies that only by doing so would it be possible to amend it. Dodik said publicly on February 18 that SNSD's aim is to confirm the "continuity" of the RS. He warned that if the HoR failed to adopt the SNSD declaration, Bosnian Serbs would interpret it as a "signal" about others' intentions towards them and the RS. (Note: As recently as January 23, Dodik warned that if the RS's place in Bosnia is not assured and there are calls to abolish the RS, "the people" of the RS will decide in a referendum whether they wish remain in Bosnia. End Note)

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RSNA: Confirming the Right to Self-Determination

14. (C) The day after the February 20 HoR session, the RSNA will hold an extraordinary session to discuss Kosovo and adopt a resolution on its "unilateral declaration of independence." In conjunction with the February 21 RSNA session NGO and student groups are mobilizing for public protests. The fate of SNSD's Declaration of Responsibility will likely impact the tone and tenor of the RSNA debate and the extent of RS public turnout for protests. Serb Democratic Party leader Mladen Bosic and Serb Radical Party (SRS) leader Mihajlo Mihajlica have already called for the RSNA to demand "the same rights" as Kosovo. Though we do not have a copy of the SNSD-proposed Kosovo resolution, we understand it will be modeled on the joint statement signed by the RS's SNSD leadership on February 18 (the document referenced in paragraph two above). Though the RS leadership's statement calls for peaceful protests by RS citizens and warns against violence, it also labels Kosovo's independence a "dangerous international precedent with unpredictable long-term consequences" for the region. More disconcertingly, it implicitly claims the right to self-determination for the RS, "even if opposed by the mother country."

Comment

15. (C) The SNSD-proposed "Declaration of Responsibility" is deliberately provocative, particularly its claim that the RS is a "state entity." This language reaffirms what we see as a significant shift in the rhetoric from the RS and its officials. For months, Dodik and other RS officials have attacked the state and sought to undermine its legitimacy, often by preventing it from functioning effectively. Over the last several weeks, Dodik and RS officials have

increasingly sought to claim the attributes of a state for the RS itself, most notably in the SNSD Main Board conclusions reference to the RS's right to self-determination. Dodik and the SNSD know that Bosniaks and Croats will oppose his declaration. By implying that their rejection would constitute an attack on the RS, Dodik is fueling fears among Bosnian Serbs that they are under assault from the Federation and do not have a secure future within Bosnia.

¶6. (C) It is tempting to dismiss allusions by Dodik and the SNSD to an RS right to self-determination as either a) tactical rhetorical support for friends and allies in Belgrade; and/or, b) political jujitsu designed to manage popular discontent within the RS over Kosovo, particularly calls for a referendum, while avoiding a firm political commitment to act on it. Undoubtedly, this is how Dodik and other RS officials will seek to spin it privately. However, it appears to us as an the beginning of a campaign to cement the RS's rhetorical claim that it has the right to opt out of Bosnia at some future date and time of its choosing. We would be wise to begin to address this with the same kind of focus the RS is showing, in coordination with our international partners, including at the February 26-27 Peace Implementation Council.

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